

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 03904 052155Z

70

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 SY-05 AID-05 EB-07 OMB-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 /078 W

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R 052112Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2688

INFO USINCSO

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EO 11652 NA

TAGS: PINS, ASEC VE

SUBJ: NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING GOV SEIZES EDITION OF CARACAS
NEWSPAPER

REF: CARACAS 3845

1. AGENTS OF THE VENEZUELAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (DISIP)
DESCENDED WITHOUT NOTICE UPON THE PUBLICATION PLANTS OF ALL
CARACAS DAILIES EARLY APR 3 AND PREVENTED THE PUBLICATION
OF THE DAY'S EDITION OF ONE NEWSPPPER, LA VERDAD. IN MOST
CASES THE DISIP AGENTS EXAMINED THE CONTENTS OF THE VARIOUS
APR 3 EDITIONS IN SEARCH OF AN ALLEGED "NINTH COMMUNIQUE"
FROM THE KIDNAPPERS OF US INDUSTRIALIST WILLIAM NIEHOUS
WHICH DISIP HAD APPRENTLY BEEN LED TO BELIEVE WAS TO BE
PUBLISHED IN A NEWSPAPER. ONLY THE SMALL-CIRCULATION TABLOID
LA VERDAD WAS PREVENTED FROM PUBLISHING AN APR 3 EDITION.
DISIP AGENTS SEIZED THOSE COPIES OF LA VERDAD ALREADY OFF
THE PRESSES AND REPORTEDLY MADE OFF WITH SOME OF THE OFFSET
PLATES FOR THAT DAY'S EDITION.

2. DURING THE AFTERNOON OF APR 3 INTERIOR MINISTER
OCTAVIO LEPAGE ISSUED A STATEMENT "CONDEMNING"THE ACTION
OF THE DISIP AGENTS, WHO IN FACT COME UNDER HIS MINISTRY'S
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PAGE 02 CARACA 03904 052155Z

JURISDICTION. LEPAGE SAID THAT "AT NO TIME" WAS SUCH AN

INVESTIGATION AUTHORIZED AND THAT HE HAD ORDERED THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE DISIP AGENTS AS SOON AS HE HAD LEARNED OF THEIR INVESTIGATION. STATING THAT ANH LIMITATION ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS OUGHT TO BE IMPOSED VOLUNTARILY BY THE PUBLISHERS THEMSELVES "OUT OF THEIR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONAL STABILIZATION," LEPAGE SAID HE HAD ORDERED AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISIP'S ACTION AGAINST THE NEWSPAPERS. THE MINISTER OFFERED THE THIN EXCUSE THAT THE STATIONING OF DISIP AGENTS NEAR THE NEWSPAPERS TO GIVE PROTECTION IN THE EVENT REPRISALS WERE ATTEMPTED FOR THE NEWSPAPERS' NON-PUBLICATION OF THE KIDNAPPERS' MESSAGES "MAY HAVE BEEN REGRETABLY MISUNDERSTOOD," AND RESULTED IN "A POLICE ACTION WHICH DOES NOT SQUARE WITH THE GOVT'S POSITION OF ABSOLUTE RESPECT FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS."

3. VENEVISION, A PRIVATELY-OWNED TV CHANNEL, SCREENED THE INTERVIEW WITH MRS. DONNA NIEHOUS DURING ITS 10PM APR 3 NEWSCAST TAPED EARLIER IN THE DAY(REF PARA4). MRS. NIEHOUS DID NOT ASK THE GOV TO PERMIT THE PUBLICATION OF THE KIDNAPPERS' ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS. SHE MERELY REITERATED HER EARLIER STATEMENTS THAT HER HUSBAND HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH POLITICS AND APPEALED AGAIN FOR HIS EARLY RELEASE.

4. COMMENT: ALREADY UNDER HARSH CRITICISM FOR ITS 72-HOUR SUSPENSION OF RADIO CARACAS TV FROM THE AIR, THE GOV HAS OPENED A PANDORA'S BOX BY ITS LATEST ACTION AGAINST THE PRESS. THE VENEZUELAN PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION HAS SPRUNG TO THE DEFENSE OF LA VERDAD, WHICH PUBLISHED ITS APR 5 EDITION WITHOUT FURTHER INTERFERENCE. THE PRESS IS NOT LIKELY TO LET THE MATTER DROP, DESPITE LEPAGE'S ATTEMPT AT AMELIORATING THE SITUATION, AND WILL CONTINUE TO TAR THE GOVT WITH THIS ISSUE FOR SOME TIME. OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADERS ARE ALSO CRITICIZING THE GOV FOR TAMPERING WITH FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION'S FREEDOM OF THE PRESS COMMITTEE, WITH TWO VENEZUELAN BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE, IS NOW MEETING IN ARUBA AND CAN HARDLY FAIL TO MENTION THE GOV'S MUZZLING OF BOTH A TV STATION AND A NEWSPAPER IN THE SAME WEEK WHEN THE COMMITTEE RELEASES ITS ANNUAL REPORT

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PAGE 03 CARACA 03904 052155Z

LATER THIS WEEK.
SHLAUDEMAM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: KIDNAPPING, INVESTIGATIONS, THE PRESS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CARACA03904
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760128-0154
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760498/aaaadfys.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 CARACAS 3845
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Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2004
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Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
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EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
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TAGS: PINS, ASEC, VE, US, DISIP, (NIEHOUS, WILLIAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006